the attention of Indian Army and BSF posted across the LoC so that infiltrators can get in;

(b) if so, whether the same has been happening for a number of years now;

(c) if so, what steps do the Army and BSF normally take during such course of action; and

(d) whether according to Government statistics of the Army and BSF, infiltrations across the LoC are the maximum during Pakistani shelling?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Prior to the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) with effect from 26.11.2003, the Pakistan army used to shell across the LoC to abet infiltration and to inflict casualties on our troops and civilians. Indian troops retaliate effectively by carrying out punitive fire assaults on the Pakistan posts suspected of abetting infiltration and on the terrorist launching pads along the LoC.

(d) Reports available do not conclusively prove that maximum infiltration attempts were made under the cover of shelling.

Decreasing profitability of Mishra Dhatu Nigam Ltd., Hyderabad

1555. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the profitability of Mishra Dhatu Nigam Ltd., Hyderabad in consistently decreasing for the last few years;

(b) if so, the details thereof for the last four years, year-wise;

(c) the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) The details of the profitability of Mishra Dhatu Nigam Limited (MIDHANI) in the last four years are as under:—

Year	Profit Before Tax (PBT) (Rs. Lakh)	Profit After Tax (RAT) *(Rs. Lakh)*
1999-2000	243.55	213.85
2000-2001	26.04	23.75
2001-2002	38.67	35.67
2002-2003	(-)226.42	(-)216.36

2. The decrease in profitability may be attributed to:

(i) Lack of economies of scale;

(ii) Increase in costs of certain inputs; (iii) Competition from imports of comparable products; (iv) Dependence on orders from the strategic sectors; (v) obsolescence of certain plants and machinery.

3. Given the constraints of MIDHANl being a strategic production unit, the following steps have been taken to improve the situation:—

(i) A core group has been constituted in the Company for cost reduction measures;

(ii) Development of new products through Research and Development;

(iii) Broadening of the customer base;

(iv) Regular review of the performance of the Company by the Government.

Reduction in avian menace

1556. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Indian Air Force has successfully reduced the avian menace; and